I. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

The USAID Representative to Afghanistan is based in Islamabad, with an outlying field office in Peshawar. For a number of years, USAID has been funding cross-border assistance to Afghans within Afghanistan, particularly in education, health care, road and bridge construction, and humanitarian assistance. Some similar efforts have been conducted with Afghan refugees based in Pakistan in the areas on the southeastern borders of Afghanistan.

In the spring of 1992, when the coalition of the "mujahadeen" rulers established their new government in Kabul, following Najibullah's demise, the AID/Rep Office hoped shortly to follow suit and move to Kabul. Optimism was high that USAID would soon be able to commence true development assistance within Afghanistan. Hopes were soon dashed, however, when the fragile coalition collapsed and disastrous fighting began, rendering Kabul unsafe. Where once Afghanistan had lacked security in the provinces, due to struggles between powerful political factions, it is now Kabul that is insecure and the rural areas relatively peaceful.

USAID is currently debating its future role in the Afghanistan context. Refugees continue to flee the country - 75,000 have recently arrived from Kabul in Peshawar alone, mostly from technocratic and professional middle-class backgrounds. With the increasing refugee population, the humanitarian assistance continues to be essential, although this is largely handled by United Nations agencies. USAID plays a developmental role through its forward-looking education, health, and democratic pluralism interventions for Afhgans out of Peshawar, especially for Afghan women.

As USAID looks ahead to a future within Afghanistan, it is crafting a development strategy around three sectoral areas, primary education, basic health, and natural resource improvement. From a gender-sensitive perspective, this strategy is powerful and innovative, since it places women at the core of the strategy, on the recognition that, for the development equation in Afghanistan to be changed, women must be dynamic participants.

II. OBJECTIVE OF TRIPS / ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY VISIT

The USAID/Pakistan Mission had requested technical assistance in drafting a Scope of Work for a WID Study of the Mission's successful interventions on behalf of women in Pakistan prior to the Mission's close-out under the Pressler Amendment. Since I was to be in Pakistan to work

with the USAID Mission, it made sense to work with the AID/Rep Office, particularly as the two offices are both in Islamabad. In fact, in advance, I had been in close communication with the WID Officer (Laura Lindskog), informing her regularly of my plans.

My visit fortuitously coincided with the strategy sessions being conducted by AID/Rep on the future of its program. At a full meeting of the AID/Rep staff, I was able to examine the three sectoral strategies with the staff and to help them refine strategic objectives, language, and impact indicators to reflect a gender sensitivity. It was at this meeting that the Mission Director (John Blackton) indicated his desire to redraft the entire strategy to fully integrate women, thus, in his words, "changing the development equation in Afghanistan." It is his contention that much of USAID's development assistance to Afghanistan has historically been ineffective because it has not been sensitive to gender issues. I was enlisted to work with the WID Officer on a redraft of the language of the strategy to incorporate this perspective. (See Annex 4)

In order to help me understand the context of the AID/Rep refugee and cross-border programs, Laura organized a three-day site visit to some of the WID-specific projects she manages, based largely in Peshawar. Additional objectives of the site visits were two-fold, to seek my recommendations on funding opportunities and to lobby my advocacy for continued support. The Agency is seriously re-evaluating its level of support for the Afghan Program due to the current political environment. As a result, the AID/Rep staff is eager to have informed advocates in Washington.

APRIL VISIT

As with my last interaction with the Afghan AID/Rep staff, this visit emerged from my availability in Islamabad for USAID/Pakistan business. I provided counsel to the WID Officer and her colleagues on a limited basis during this time.

While I was in Islamabad, the funding level for Afghanistan in FY 94 was announced at $10 million, the lowest amount acceptable for the Mission Director to consider moving the program from a cross-border program to one based in Kabul. The new strategy for Afghanistan had already been approved by the Asia Bureau, to focus on primary education for both boys and girls, reduction of maternal and infant mortality through MCH centers, and limited reforestation.

While in Islamabad, I met with the AID/Rep staff to be briefed on the current projects. One major activity is the primary education program managed by UNO. The contract has just been renewed until 1995. The current staff has substantial Afghanistan experience, is readily mobile, and is prepared to move into Afghanistan at any time. The program has been providing teacher

training, curriculum development, and material support which has been going cross-border. The materials are culturally appropriate and gender sensitive.

The other current major activities are health related, including an MCH program and health system support. The contract is managed by MSH through an Afghan counterpart. The contract ends in 1994. MSH has been encouraging sustainable revisions, e.g., fees for service, for a long time, in light of this EOP. If the project is rebid for the MCH portion only, MSH would be likely to win it.

I also collected relevant documents for use by the Washington design group and sent E-mails requesting information on the household approach. In an effort to design program interventions in an integrated manner, strategic planning is beginning in Washington with a household focus rather than a sectoral focus.

III. CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

FEBRUARY VISIT

The objectives of the trip were fulfilled and exceeded. The presentation on Gender Issues in Development was attended by the entire AID/Rep Office, including the Mission Director, and was very well received. John Blackton found the information on USAID's current approach to gender issues sufficiently interesting and important to ask that it be presented to the USAID/Pakistan Mission as well. It was certainly an unexpected outcome to have the Mission Director respond so favorably.

It was also a surprise to hear the Mission Director indicate his desire to truly mainstream women into his new strategy for development assistance to Afghanistan in order to "change the development equation" in the country. Although the AID/Rep staff appears to be willing to follow his lead, there is skepticism that AID/Washington will find this strategic approach too radical for Afghanistan as they perceive it. It will take some effective persuasion to convince AID/W to accept this approach. (This did not prove to be true, as AID/W readily accepted the strategy.)

Another outcome of the visit was to reinforce the WID Officer's efforts. She is committed and knowledgeable but she has never had any formal training for her current assignment. She is very eager to participate in any training organized for WID Officers. The Mission should be encouraged to support this training.

APRIL VISIT

There is concern that AID/Washington staff will unilaterally design a program from a household and gender perspective without regard for current successful program interventions. I asked for a briefing from the AID/Rep staff, since I had been involved with the conceptualization of a design approach concentrating on gender issues as they emanate from the household, and I wanted to be able to return to Washington well informed in order to participate in subsequent design meetings.

The WID Officer is also concerned about how to make the transition of USAID's support to the NGOs which currently offer cross-border and refugee assistance as the program moves to Kabul. The two primary benefactors are TAF and the IRC, which in turn both support several indigenous NGOs. The debate is over what fits under the new strategy and when funding will be terminated for commitments made under the FY93 funding. The WID Officer is concerned that worthwhile activities which largely benefit women will be prematurely abandoned.

IV. IMPLICATIONS / NEXT STEPS

A profound implication of the Mission Director's redrafting of his strategy is the role model it provides to other Missions. It is particularly dramatic in a country where a fundamentalist ideology severely limits women's freedoms. As a strategy, Blackton argues that development cannot proceed when women have such a peripheral role. Skeptics will argue that a fundamentalist, religious and political culture and state will not allow women to participate meaningfully in development. One can only test the theory for its validity.

As the new programs are designed, the Mission Director is eager to have a gender perspective built into its three sectoral areas, primary education, basic health, and reforestation. He will request technical assistance in this process and would prefer an integrated gender perspective rather than three separate sectoral approaches. He has also requested a gender workshop for his staff and collaborators if the program is approved. Design meetings will need to be conscientious about considering the relevance of ongoing activities to the future strategy. For example, given the relevance to the Afghan scene and the gender sensitivity of the current primary education project, it would appear that every effort should be made to integrate this program, or portions of it, into the new strategy. A series of communications have already been sent regarding the plans for redesign, as well as a packet of materials on the household/family perspective.

Because of this uncertainty, the AID/Rep Office is in a transitional phase. Many staff are leaving on regular rotation. Some are leaving because the nature of the program is changing and because

they are perplexed about when a move will be realistic. All are disappointed in the low funding levels for FY94. New staff will need to be recruited for the program when it moves to Kabul. The WID Officer has asked for support in strategizing about effective transitions for the funded NGOs.

Perhaps the most serious hindrance to putting the Afghan strategy into effect is the current political instability. It is possible to design a program which effectively responds to a conservative religious and cultural environment; however, USAID cannot deal effectively with political turbulence. The program will only be endorsed and move forward if AID/W becomes persuaded that peace is at hand or that USAID can continue to work effectively with refugees and on a cross-border basis despite the fighting.

If USAID closes out its assistance to Afghans, whether as refugees or cross-border, it will behoove all of us to proceed as with the Pakistan program to capture the lessons learned about working with women in a very seclusionary environment.

V. SUMMARY

Women in the Afghanistan development assistance programs are benefitting greatly from USAID's interventions. USAID has been conscientious about observing cultural mores in order not to incite a backlash from counteracting forces. As a result, USAID's programs have been well accepted. Also, because USAID has been concerned about doing more than simply rescuing Afghans from a crisis situation, it has designed interventions which will have a long-term impact. One can only hope that USAID will continue to be able to be involved in its development activities on behalf of Afghans while they struggle to reestablish the viability of their country.

This profile has been disrupted through the war years. Peasant women who worked freely in the fields, nomad women who roamed in the fields tending their flocks, and city women who participated in education and employment with men have found themselves caught up in an ideological and cultural war, not only between the Muslims, communists, and Christian West but also among different Afghan resistance movements. Many women have had to don the veil for the first time in their lives - and many have done this willingly to secure and legitimize whatever advances they have achieved in social status.

Women now comprise more than one half of the population, estimated at 16.5 million people, of which nearly one third are currently in refugee status in Pakistan and Iran. Seventy five percent of these refugees are women and children. About nine percent of the population, or more than one million people, are estimated to have lost their lives, including three times as many men as women. The deaths of Afghan men have left an estimated 700,000 widows and orphans. Additionally, approximately 300,000 men, women and children have been left disabled. This figure is rising with the estimated 10 million anti-personnel mines still scattered throughout Afghanistan's rural areas.

The meager yet positive social gains achieved by women up to 1978, as measured by increases in education and employment, have been negated by the war. Afghan women have some of the lowest development indicators in the world. Life expectancy is 40 years. Illiteracy is 95%. Infant mortality is 164 per 1000 live births. The fertility rate is 6.8 children born per woman. Twenty percent of adult married women have been widowed due to the war.

While the above scenario paints a bleak picture of women's current status, experience with refugee women in the camps and cross-border programs demonstrates clearly the commitment of Afghan women to the development of their country and to improvement in their personal lives. However, experience also shows that program design must be carefully crafted to account for the constraints for women of a conservative cultural and religious environment, restricted mobility, fear of foreign cultural influence, the continuing state of strife and factionalism and most importantly, their poverty and underdevelopment.

Afghan women acknowledge that many obstacles lie in the way of their aspirations. Nevertheless, they are firm in their conviction that they can, and should, play an active part in the reconstruction of war-torn Afghanistan. Women's input into rebuilding Afghanistan will be essential to the growth of national prosperity, for the contribution which women can make is a proven fact. As stated earlier, in order for the development equation in Afghanistan to be changed and for real progress to be made, women and girls must, and can, be dynamic participants.

Fetwa of United Ulama of Afghanistan
(Consensus and Declaration of Religious Scholars)

Verses of Quran and Hadith say that lack of education can mislead as well as lead to immitation of foreign ideologies. Religious scholars believe that education is obligatory (fars) for man and woman. But the method of learning in the case of woman is different, in that she must protect her honor and decency, as well as keep herself covered while studying. A woman should learn from people who are not strangers to her, such as family members, in the environment of her home. If such a possibility does not exist, she can learn from strangers provided she is in the presence of her family and the stranger does not see her. Purdah and decency is a must for a woman. If a man allows his wife to go out unnessarily, both he and she will be sinned. A strange man is not allowed to see a strange woman, and vise versa. A woman must stay in her hom and/or tent and preserve her inner/outer appearance. If she needs to leave her home for some reason, she should follow the directions listed below:

> No perfume; no beautiful, eye-catching attire; no soft/clinging clothes; no tight clothes; the entire body should be covered; no men-like attire; no infidel-style clothing; anklets should not jingle; no provocative walking; no walking in the middle of street; no going out without permission from her man; no talking with strange men; when talking according to religious sharia, no laughing; no looking at strangers with passion; and no association with men.

Belief is that a woman cannot go to the mosque alone to offer namas prayer. In general, it is not permissable for a woman to go out to school. It has been proven that schools have not taught women religious rituals; nor have they corrected their wrong actions. All outside work has been given to the man, and man provides for the woman. Learning subjects such as history, geography and English is immitation from foreigners. A woman's participation in in social life is not right, since 90% of men are unemployed, therefore, there is no need to give women jobs. Reading and writing for women is not desired because if they learn how to read and write, they will communicate with those that they wish to be friends with.

We declare that women, without necessity, do not have the right to go out in the public and the schools. We ask the leaders to forbid Moslem women, according to the sharia texts, to go to the schools. If this action is not taken, the success of Jihad will turn to failure and we will face harsh problems. It is a shame that they are calling schools names, such as Amhat-al-Momeneen (mother of moslem women). If corrective action is not taken and women still go out and show themselves, we will be forced to take action ourselves.

- DUE TO THE NATURE OF THE PROGRAM, THERE IS A LARGE BUILD UP OF COMMODITIES AND EQUIPMENT WHICH ARE PROBLEMATIC TO MAINTAIN, WAREHOUSE OR DIVEST.

- MOST CONTRACT/GRANT COMPLETION DATES AND PACDS FALL BETWEEN JANUARY AND JUNE OF 1994, AND LIKELY FUNDING AND STAFFING LEVELS CANNOT SUSTAIN BOTH EXISTING AS WELL AS PROPOSED ACTIVITIES.

THE ASIA BUREAU PLACES A HIGH PRIORITY ON AN ORDERLY CLOSEOUT OF ACTIVITIES WHICH DO NOT DIRECTLY SUPPORT NEW STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.

ACTIONS REQUESTED:

- THE MISSION WILL WORK WITH IG/A IN PHASEOUT OF THE EXISTING PROGRAM AND ON HOW TO HANDLE THE FUTURE PROGRAM.

- THE MISSION WILL CABLE A PROPOSAL FOR TDY ASSISTANCE BEGINNING IN MAY TO DEAL WITH DIVESTMENT OF EXCESS PROPERTY. THE BUREAU WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO BE FORTHCOMING WITH ADDITIONAL OE RESOURCES FOR THIS TDY ASSISTANCE.

- THE MISSION WILL PROVIDE A TIMETABLE FOR SHIFTING THE PROGRAM OUT OF EXISTING ACTIVITIES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE BUREAU NEEDS TO KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, HOW MUCH EARLIER THE MISSION CAN PHASE OUT OF CURRENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES IN ORDER TO PERMIT FUNDING OF THE NEW DEVELOPMENT-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES.

. PROPOSED PROGRAM:

THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY. ITS FOCUS ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN APPEARS TO BE APPROPRIATE, AND IT REPRESENTS AN ATTRACTIVE CONFIGURATION OF PROGRAMS, AS THERE IS AN INTERCONNECTION OF INTERVENTIONS AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL. THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION COMPONENTS WILL TAKE A LARGER SHARE OF THE RESOURCES. REFORESTATION WAS DEEMED TO BE A LOWER PRIORITY, BUT THROUGH THIS COMPONENT, AID MAY CONTINUE TO BE ENGAGED IN DEMINING. THERE WAS SOME CONCERN REGARDING SUSTAINABILITY, IMPACT, FOOD SECURITY, LAND AND RESOURCE TENURE RELATING TO FORESTRY, LACK OF A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE NEED TO WORK WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES, CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS TO WORKING WITH WOMEN, AND SECURITY CONDITIONS INSIDE AFGHANISTAN. SEPTEL WILL COVER ISSUES OF DEMINING AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION. NEVERTHELESS, THERE WAS GENERAL CONSENSUS THAT THE PROPOSED PROGRAM IS FEASIBLF. BLACKTON SAID THAT THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM COULD MOVE TO KABUL IN A THREE MONTH PERIOD, SHOULD CONDITIONS CHANGE SUFFICIENTLY TO ALLOW SUCH A MOVE.

. FUNDING LEVELS:

FUNDING FOR FY 94 IS NOT EXPECTED TO EXCEED $20 MILLION. BLACKTON SAID WITH THE STRATEGY'S PROPOSED $50 MILLION LEVEL, AID COULD REACH HALF OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH HEALTH INTERVENTIONS AND 25 PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS. WITH A $20 MILLION LEVEL, THE THREE ELEMENTS OF THE STRATEGY CAN BE PURSUED. BELOW A $20 MILLION LEVEL, WE WOULD HAVE TO DROP THE FORESTRY

COMPONENT. FA/B SAID FOR FY 94 THERE WILL BE $10 MILLION MAXIMUM FOR ESF, AND THUS $20 MILLION MAXIMUM FOR THE PROGRAM. FYI RECENT BUDGET DECISIONS INDICATE THAT OVERALL LEVEL FOR AFGHANISTAN COULD BE $10 MILLION. END FYI. THIS FUNDING LEVEL SCENARIO, ALONG WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT FTE LEVELS WILL BE LOWER THAN PLANNED, INCREASES THE MOMENTUM FOR SHIFTING THE PROGRAM OUT OF EXISTING ACTIVITIES.

9. REORGANIZATION:

THE MISSION IN ISLAMABAD WILL BE CALLED THE USAID FOR PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. THERE WILL BE AN IDENTIFIABLE AFGHAN UNIT WITHIN THE MISSION. ASIA/FPM HAS THE MISSIONIS PLAN FOR HOW IT WILL MANAGE DOWN TO THE PRESENT FY 94 FTE CEILING, AND WILL TRACK AFGHANISTAN SHADOW FTE IN THE COMBINED OPERATION OF THE USAID. THE BUREAU EXPECTS FURTHER CUTS IN FTE FOR FY 94 AND WOULD LOOK TO ABSORB SOME OF THESE REDUCTIONS FROM THE AFGHANISTAN PROGRAM. THIS IMPLIES STRICT ADHERENCE TO THE AGREED-TO PRESSLER FTE LEVELS.

ACTION REQUESTED:
BY THE END OF APRIL, THE MISSION IS REQUESTED TO SUBMIT A STAFFING SCENARIO WHICH INCLUDES A FURTHER THREE USDH FTE STAFF REDUCTION AND LAYS OUT RESULTING PROGAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS.

10. SPECIAL AUTHORITIES:

THE BUREAU AND THE MISSION AGREE THAT IT IS TIME TO MOVE FROM A PROGRAM UNDER SPECIAL AUTHORITIES TO A MORE TYPICAL AID PROGRAM WITH NORMAL AID AUTHORITIES AND WHICH FOLLOWS REGULAR HANDBOOK PROCEDURES. THEREFORE, ALL SPECIAL AUTHORITIES WILL BE WITHDRAWN FROM THE FIELD AND REDELEGATED TO THE BUREAU. ASIA/DR/PD WILL MONITOR AND RECORD THE USE OF THESE AUTHORITIES BY AID/W; THE BUREAU WILL THEN CONDUCT A REVIEW OF THE USE OF SPECIAL AUTHORITIES IN SIX TO TWELVE MONTHS AND THEN DECIDE WHICH AUTHORITIES ARE STILL NEEDED. THE GOAL IS TO HAVE AS FEW AS POSSIBLE, AND TO MAINSTREAM THE PROGRAM'S PROCEDURES.

ACTION REQUESTED: THE MISSION IS REQUESTED TO SUBMIT ASAP A COMPLETE LIST OF AID AFGHANISTAN SPECIAL AUTHORITIES, AND INFORM US OF ANY THAT SHOULD BE RETAINED IN THE FIELD.

11. MISSION MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT:

THE DRAFT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY WAS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THESE DISCUSSIONS, AND FA/MCS REPS PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETINGS, MAKING ORAL PRESENTATIONS. UPON FINALIZATION OF THE FULL REPORT, A FORMAL AID/W REVIEW SESSION WILL BE HELD AND COMMENTS WILL BE CABLED TO THE MISSION.

12. OTHER ITEMS:

ACTIONS:
THE BUREAU HAS PROVIDED BY SEPTEL, A RESPONSE TO THE MISSION'S DEOB/REOB QUESTIONS AND ISSUES. IN REDESIGN OF THE AFGHANISTAN PORTFOLIO, THE MISSION IS ENCOURAGED TO WORK THROUGH ASIA/DR IN LINING UP ANALYTICAL RESOURCES AND

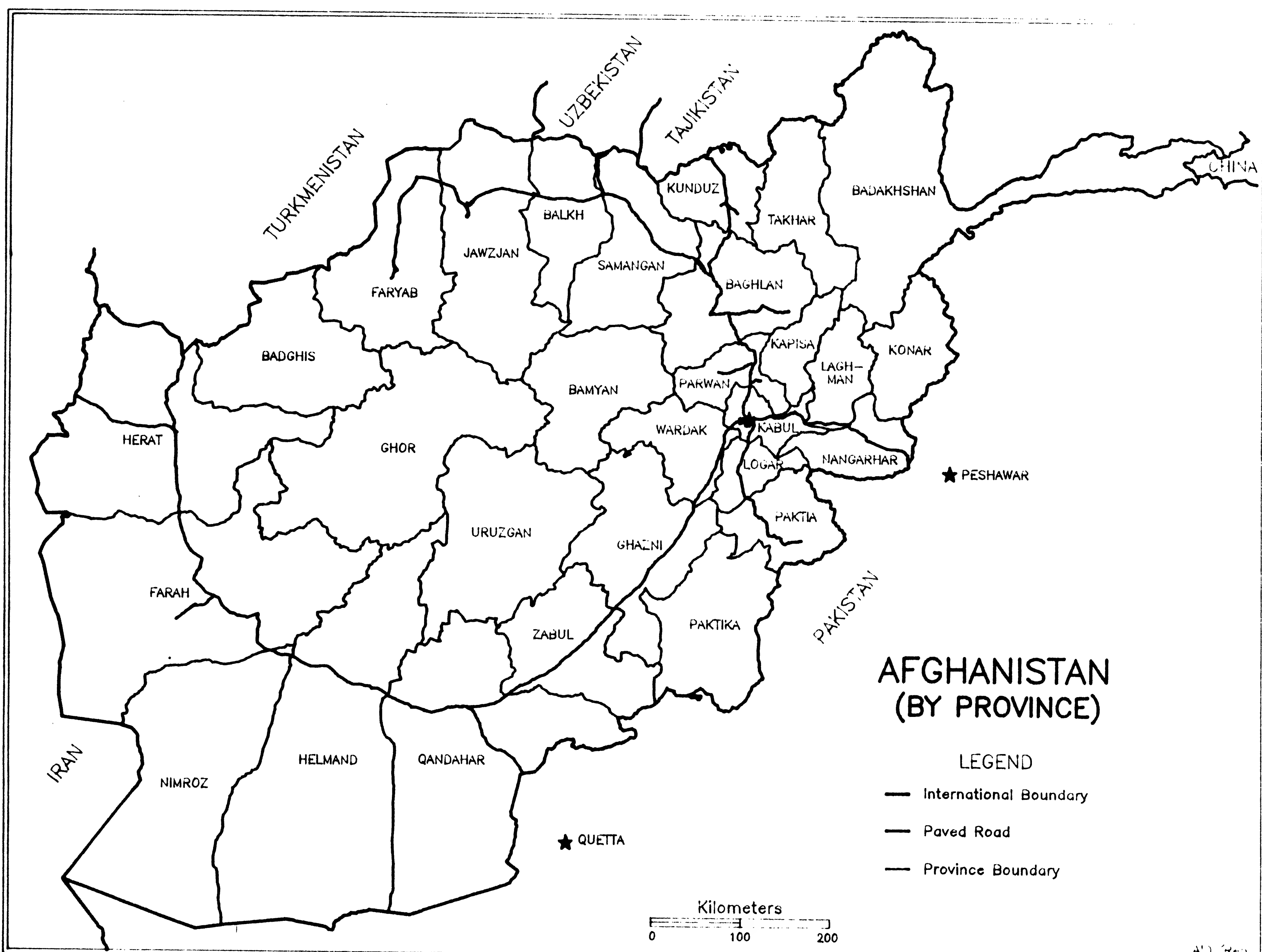
RESOURCES TO HELP WITH THE SCOPING AND DEFINITION OF PROJECTS. ASIA/TR WELCOMES A PROPOSAL FROM THE MISSION FOR JOINT SCOPING AND PLANNING THIS SUMMER.

13. THIS CABLE HAS BEEN CLEARED BY STATE/SA/PAB.

WHARTON

ANNEXES

THE FUTURES GROUP/GENESYS PROJECT
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TURKMENISTAN
UZBEKISTAN
TAJIKISTAN
CHINA
KUNDUZ
BADAKHSHAN
BALKH
TAKHAR
JAWZJAN
SAMANGAN
FARYAB
BAGHLAN
BADGHIS
KAPISA
KONAR
LAGH-
MAN
PARWAN
BAMYAN
HERAT
WARDAK
KABUL
GHOR
NANGARHAR
LOGAR
PESHAWAR
PAKTIA
URUZGAN
GHAZNI
FARAH
PAKISTAN
PAKTIKA
ZABUL
AFGHANISTAN
(BY PROVINCE)
IRAN
HELMAND
QANDAHAR
LEGEND
NIMROZ
International Boundary
Paved Road
QUETTA
Province Boundary
Kilometers
0
100
200

GRETCHEN BLOOM
Gender/WID Advisor, ASIA BUREAU, USAID WASHINGTON

AID/REP Afghanistan Itinerary February 21-25, 1993

SUNDAY, Feb. 21

Morning	Review AID/REP Strategy papers and other related documents
02:30 p.m.	Brief AID/REP staff on ASIA Bureau WID Activities
04:00 p.m.	Meet with Muslim Sisters University (3 Representatives)

MONDAY, Feb. 22

Morning	Work with Laura on WID Action Plan Visit Afghan Women's Education Center
10:30 a.m.	Meet with Mahbuba Karokhail, Afghan Women's Education Center
12:30 p.m.	Attend Brown Bag Lunch Alexia Coke, Austrian Relief Committee
05:30 p.m.	Depart for Peshawar, Via PK 630 Accommodation at the USAID Staff House Tel: 44714
06:30 p.m.	Visit market place

TUESDAY, Feb. 23

08:00 - 05:00 p.m.	International Rescue Committee (Toc Dunlop), Visit Camp Schools, Female Education Programs Accommodation at John Tucker's Residence Tel: 840324
03:30 p.m.	Laura to CCSC
07:00 p.m.	Dinner with John Tucker, Gerry Boardman & Ivelyn Van Every

WEDNESDAY, Feb. 24

08:00 a.m.	The ASIA Foundation (Carla Grissman with Nancy Hatch Dupree) Visit Afghan Womens Resource Center
11:00 a.m.	Meet with Gerry Boardman on UNO training for women
01:45 p.m.	Depart for Islamabad, Via PK 631

CONTACTS

USAID (O/AID/Rep) (Islamabad)
Laura Lindskog, WID Officer
John Blackton, Director
Jonathan Sperling, Deputy Director
Hank Cushing, Field Officer (Peshawar)
John Tucker, Chief, Office of Education (Peshawar)
Pam Wegge, Education Office
Ray De Bruce, Controller
Basharat Ali, Chief, Office of Commodities
Curt Wolters, Chief, Program Office
Doug Palmer, Office of Health

Asia Foundation (Peshawar)
Carla Grissman, Acting Director

University of Nebraska/Omaha (Peshawar)
Gerry Boardman, Chief of Party, Primary Education Project
Ivalyn Van Ivry, Curriculum Consultant
Yusuf, Director, Master Teacher Trainer Program

Austrian Relief Committee (Peshawar)
Alexia Coke, Consultant

International Rescue Committee (Peshawar)
Toc Dunlop, Program Director
Sakeena Yacoobi, Director, Teacher Training Program

Afghan Women's Education Center (Islamabad)
Mahbooba Karokhail, Director

Muslim Sisters University (Peshawar)

Afghan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (Peshawar)
Nancy Hatch Dupree

AFGHAN WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

Women and girls are at the core of this strategy, fully participating in each sectoral activity, because their potential contribution to the society and the economy have not historically been systemized. In order for the development equation in Afghanistan to be changed, and for real progress to be made, women and girls must be dynamic participants. This message has not been heard in the past. Without informed health interventions, for example, by women on behalf of their children and themselves, infant, child and maternal mortality will not be reduced. Illiteracy dramatically reduces women's abilities to reduce fertility; and lack of education hinders their full productive contribution to household economies. Efforts to improve the rural environment will fail without the full involvement of women whose reliance on natural resources for household needs is extensive. These development strategies, which fully integrate women and girls must nonetheless take into consideration cultural, religious and ideological constraints if they are to have their full potential impact.

WOMEN AND GIRLS

Social Sector

Development efforts in Afghanistan which fully incorporate women must first take into account the mosaic of the Afghan female's role in society. Afghanistan, like many developing countries, is a country of contrasts. The diverse nature of Afghan women's life styles can be classified in four categories; women of Kabul, women of provincial urban centers, village women and nomadic women.

Yet in spite of their diversity, there are commonalities found among the female population. One of the most crucial of these concerns the orientation of Islam, which influences and dictates women's status in society. This conservative force designates a range of norms from which deviation is negatively sanctioned. The separation of the sexes is pervasive with religious values serving as guides to sex role allocation and ideal conduct between male and female. While these roles may vary somewhat among the four groupings of female life styles, women's roles remain subject to a primarily conservative religious ideology. This influence has been exacerbated and intensified in reaction to 14 years of the former Soviet presence and the subsequent disintegration of a central government authority.

This religious retrenchment is an effort to reject foreign influence and to re-establish the integrity of the family. The family is the single most important institution in Afghan society. Women are viewed as representatives of family honor and as such must be protected from corruption at all costs. Traditionally the close inter-relationships between male and female roles generate mutual respect, with men taking responsibility for the public domain and women for the private domain. Women are sheltered both physically and psychologically from a world which is perceived by both sexes as politically, socially and economically perilous. Men can exert some measure of control over this perception by secluding the female members of the household.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ACBAR	Afghan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AID	Agency for International Developement
AID/REP	USAID Representative to Afghanistan
ARC	Austrian Relief Committee
AWEC	Afghan Women's Education Center
AWRC	Afghan Women's Resource Center
EOP	End of Project
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MCH	Maternal & Child Heath
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations International Development Fund for Women
UNO	University of Nebraska / Omaha
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WELP	Women's English Language Program
WID	Women in Development

Trip Report

CHANGING THE DEVELOPMENT EQUATION

IN AFGHANISTAN



By:
Gretchen Bloom

February/April 1993
Prepared for:
Office of Women in Development
Bureau of Research and Development
Agency for International Development
Contract No. PDC-0100-Z-00-9044-00

GENESYS

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C. Women's English Language Program
D. Women's Heath Educator Training Program
E. Women's Public Administration Program
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